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Pull The Plug And Get Out And Play

(Clearfield, Utah) – Local health officials are concerned that American kids spend on average about five hours each day in front of a screen for entertainment including television, video games, cell phones, and the Internet.

“This means that over the course of a year, kids spend more time in front of a screen than in school,” said Tiffany Leishman, a community health educator with the Davis County Health Department. “Screen time cuts into family time and is a leading cause of obesity in both adults and children.”

According to Leishman, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children over the age of two spend no more than one or two hours a day in front of a screen.

Children under the age of two should have no screen time.

Leishman said, “We encourage families to turn off the screens and get out and play by observing National Unplug and Play Week that runs April 18-24.

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Lewis Garrett, director of the county's health department said, "Watching less TV increases opportunities for physical activity, decreases exposure to ads for unhealthy foods, and improves family time." Anyone and everyone can participate. All that is needed is a little bit of creativity, he said.

Leishman offers a few ideas to fill the extra time:

- Find out about your area's community center or park's activities
- Go swimming at an indoor pool
- Visit the zoo
- Go ice or roller skating
- Plant a vegetable or herb garden
- Start a neighborhood basketball, soccer, or kickball game
- Take a nature hike
- Start a community exercise group
- Train for a 5K
- Begin a family project

Try to pull the plug for the entire week, Garrett said. "If it seems too challenging, designate a day or two of the week as screen-free days or even start with just eliminating the TV during meal times. Even small steps can help families be more active together," he said.

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